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ABSTRACT

The success of the Developmental Skills Program offered at Los Angeles Southwest College, a 96% black institution, is indicated by an average student grade equivalent gain of 2.3 years in one semester; a 5 year average accelerated academic growth rate that is 5.9 times the rate of academic growth black inner-city students have experienced in the past; and an increased retention rate of 80%. The success of the program is heartening in view of the drop in student basic skills which has been decried in Los Angeles and nationwide, and of the problems which such programs face in terms of curriculum restructuring, program development, implementation and evaluation, and determining effective teaching techniques. Specific methodologies apparently related to program success include testing and placement techniques, group orientation, close instructor contact, use of skills specialists, course uniformity, non-traditional reading assignments, firm deadlines, pre- and post-testing, and required departmental meetings. A description of evaluation services offered by the Division of Program Evaluation, Research and Pupil Services is included in an appendix. References for educational program evaluation and audit, learning skills centers, and programs for disadvantaged or inner-city students are listed in a bibliography. (TP)

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MYTH EXPOSED: ACADEMICALLY DEFICIENT STUDENTS GAIN 2.3 GRADE EQUIVALENTS IN ONLY ONE SEMESTER AT A 96% BLACK INNER-CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES

Or

Inner-City Academic Acceleration: How to Structure a Developmental Skills Program so that Black, Inner-City Students Accelerate Their Academic Growth Rate to a Rate 5.9 Times as Great as They Have Achieved in the Past

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This paper is a joint contribution of the Evaluation Team of the Developmental Skills Program of the Los Angeles Southwest College and of the Division of Program Evaluation, Research, and Pupil Services of the Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, with the above-named persons acting as authors.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. 1

INTRODUCTION. 2

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES 3

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN FORMULATING A BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM. 5

SPECIFIC METHODOLOGIES EMPLOYED IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS DEPARTMENT 8

THE DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS PROGRAM. 10

RECENT REORGANIZATION OF THE DEVELOMENTAL SKILLS DEPARTMENT 11

PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODOLOGY. 12

PROGRAM EVALUATION FINDINGS 13

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 17

RECOMMENDATIONS 18

APPENDIX I. 19

BIBLIOGRAPHY I. 21

BIBLIOGRAPHY II 29

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*The three initial evaluation services were: (1) Educational Program Evaluation Planning, (2) Educational Program Audit, and (3) Research. A description of each of these services is shown in Appendix 1 of this paper. More recently, another evaluation service, Program Evaluation implementation, was developed, and is now also offered to the ninety-five districts in Los Angeles County.

INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles Southwest College, one of the nine community colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District (the largest community college district in the nation), draws from feeder high schools located in Watts and other similar surrounding South Central Los Angeles communities where the high school reading test scores are typically in the lowest 15% in the State of California.

As this inner-city college began to wrestle with the problem of matching actual entering student placement test scores (70% or more of entering students scored below the 7.0 grade equivalent level) with relevant educational programs, it recognized early that there was, indeed, among students and faculty a real discrepancy between the expectations and aspirations of entering students and the actual entering student aptitude test score level. This discrepancy was so dramatic that a climate of urgency prompted the college to create an Innovative Developmental Skills Department in 1976. This Department began to operate instruction in basic reading, writing, listening, and mathematics in a laboratory setting that emphasized individual instruction and personalized tutorial assistance. Some of the dramatic results associated with the enrollment in the Innovative Program were shown to be: (1) a grade equivalent gain of 2.3 years in just one semester; (2) a 5-year average accelerated academic growth rate that is 5.9 times the rate of academic growth these Black inner-city students have experienced in the past and (3) an increased retention rate of 80%.

It seems clear that the disparity found between entering students' aspirations and the students' basic skills entry level is not just a local one; that it applies not only to Los Angeles Southwest College, but to most California, and even American community colleges in varying degrees. It is felt that the Innovative Program at this inner-city college is one that should be shared with the academic community.

Within this paper -- which is the vehicle for sharing the successful Developmental Skills Program -- the need for this kind of program is placed into national and local perspectives, and a strong recommendation is made for community college administrators to recognize that students who are deficient in basic skills cannot, upon initial entrance to college, function effectively in college-level work and, therefore, first need a program that will improve their basic skills. The success of the Basic Skills Program at this 96% Black college clearly shows that such an approach can be very effective. Since this program was so successful in this inner-city situation, it seems probable that administrative and other educational leaders in other inner-city community colleges would find this program's approach one worth considering and possibly implementing in whole or in part.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES*

During the past year many articles have been written decrying the continous drop in students' basic skills. A recent article in the Los Angeles Times stated that "the reading, writing and mathematical skills of American students from elementary school through college are now in a prolonged and broad scale decline and that the decline dates back to the mid-1960's" and "shows no signs of bottoming out."[1]

Another article on the same subject appeared in Newsweek Magazine, pointing out that "nationwide, the statistics on both reading and writing grow more appalling each year. In September, 1975, the College Entrance Examination Board announced that Scholastic Aptitude Test scores in verbal skills showed the biggest drop in two decades." Also, "the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) said that its latest studies show the essays of 13- and 17-year-olds to be far more awkward, incoherent and disorganized than the efforts of those tested six years ago."[2]

Although this decline in students' academic preparation has a tremendous impact on all institutions of higher learning, its effects are even more severe on California community colleges for which entrance tests a-e not required. This college system boasts an "open door" policy, which means that it accepts for enrollment all who are 18 years old or older or high school graduates. Effectively, this means that any school dropout who is 18 years old or older can attend community colleges without any reference to his preparation in the basic skills.

Some writers on the subject have been careful to point out that the decline in student skills encompassed "all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and both private and public school students,"[3] although an earlier report on reading scores in Los Angeles County showed that, on the whole, those school districts with a high percentage of minority students were reading in the lower percentile ranges while those with a low percentage of minority students were reading in the higher percentile ranges.[4] For example, 12th graders in the Los Angeles Unified School District were reading at the 29th percentile with 55% minority enrollment, 12th graders in the

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*The other coauthors of this paper wish to express appreciation to Dr. Major Thomas who wrote this section and who was successful in selling the Developmental Skills Program concept to the other administrators at Los Angeles Southwest College.

[1]The Los Angeles Times, August 15, 1976. See also articles on this same subject in the Los Angeles Times dated August 16 and 17, 1976.

[2]Newsweek Magazine, December 8, 1975.

[3]The Los Angeles Times, Op. Cit.

[4]The Los Angeles Times, December 3, 1974.

Inglewood Unified School District were reading at the 2nd percentile with 70% minority enrollment, while 12th graders in the Compton Unified School District were reading at the 1st percentile with 98% minority enrollment. Conversely, 12th graders in the Torrance Unified School District were reading at the 80th percentile with 14% minority enrollment, 12th graders in the Palos Verdes Penisula Unified School District were reading at the 97th percentile with 16% minority enrollment.

These data suggest that, at least in Los Angeles County if not on a national level, school districts comprised of a high percentage of minority students will have a greater need to institute basic skills programs. If unified school districts fail to do so, their poorly prepared students will enter college without the ability to read and "write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and lucidity."[5]

All college administrators who are armed with these facts and who are also told that reading and math scores have been dipping annually for 13 years,[6] should expect less skilled students to matriculate at their colleges. College officials of inner-city community colleges and/or community colleges with a perponderance of minority students should realize that drastic changes must be made in their traditional instructional programs to provide for a "bottom" layer of basic skills courses designed to prepare students to perform college-level work.

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[5]Newsweek Magazine, Op. Cit.

[6]The Los Angeles Times, September 12, 1976.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN FORMULATING A BASIC SKILLS PROGRAM

Los Angeles Southwest College, a "Black" community college; i.e., one whose student body is 96% Black, and which is located in a low income section of the city is faced with a myriad of problems in structuring an educational program designed to meet the needs of its students. First, a preponderance of its students will require financial aid in order to attend college. Second, since the college must maintain an "open door" policy, it must provide "college-level" education to the students wihin the range of scholastic ability from the second through the fourteenth grades. Third, the college is under close scrutiny by members of the community and educators of other institutions of high learning to ascertain that the Black institution does not "appear" to fall to the rank of a second- or third-rate college. Fourth, there is great difficulty in trying to convince the Board of Trustees that the College has some unique educational needs that require the services of specially trained instructors in the areas of "remedial" reading, writing and math. Fifth, and perhaps the most difficult problem, is selling a developmental skills program to a group of Black students who feel that they are already "behind" in the system because they have, in the past, been unsuspecting victims of irrelevant educational programs. Nevertheless, the evidence is quite clear that the deficiency in the basic skills of entering college students will require that the traditional liberal arts curriculum be restructured to provide a "layer" of very basic developmental skills classes.

College placement tests administrered at Los Angeles Southwest College over the last three years[7] indicate that 77% of incoming freshmen students are reading at or below the 7th grade level, and that only 4% are reading at 10th or higher grade level. Further, the distribution of grades on writing samples (essays) is almost identical to the reading scores. Finally, the math

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[7] The college placement test consists of three parts: a reading comprehension test, a math test and a one-page written essay. Tests used during this period were (1) California Survey Series, Survey of Reading Achievement, Advanced, Form 1, Tiegs and Clark, (McGraw-Hill, 1959), (3(Cooperative School and College Ability Tests, Form 1A, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976, (3) Stanford Achievement Test: Advanced Paragraph Meaning Test, Form W, X and Y, Kelley, Madden, Gardner and Rudman (Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964), and (4) Nelson Reading Test, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), Boston, Massachuetts. The distribution of reading scores has been essentially the same regardless of the measuring instrument employed.

placement test scores show that 94% need basic math. Of these, 39% need developmental work in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, while the other 61% need math below the level of elementary algebra.[8]

Faced with these data, the administration at Los Angeles Southwest College had to make some instruction choices:

1) add some remedial reading or English courses to the instructional program
2) "water-down" present English and math classes
3) ignore the data or
4) formulate a new program designed to meet the educational needs of incoming students -- an all essential skills building program.[9]

The administrators at this "Black" community college, with a very modest budget, conducted an investigation to determine whether a basic skills program was necessary and, if so, to ascertain an appropriate program for possible adoption.

Since many students could not read, write and perform elementary mathematical calculations, it was basic to develop courses of instruction in these areas. Since studies show a high correlation among reading, writing, listening and speaking[10] it was decided that these courses should be taken concurrently.

A basic skills program was adopted which was comprised of four parts:

1) a basic reading course
2) an elementary writing course
3) a basic math course, and
4) a reading/writing/math laboratory.

Students who scored below 7.0 grade level were required to enroll concurrently in the reading and writing courses and to attend

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[8]The measuring instruments used were the Cooperative School and College Ability Tests, Form 1A, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969; and The Nelson-Denney Reading Test, Forms C and D, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973.

[9]Tyra L. Duncan-Hall, The Community Colleges' Responsibility for Essential Skills Programs, CCJCA pub. (Community College, Vol. 1, January, 1977.

[10]Walter Lobran, The Language of Elementary School Children (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963) in E. Brooks Smith, Kenneth S. Goodman and Robert Meredith, Language and Thinking in School (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston), p. 17-28.

the lab from one to three hours weekly for individualized instruction. If the student was also deficient in math, a professional counselor recommended that he be enrolled in the full complement of developmental skills classes during his first semester.

The three unit basic reading class was conducted in a classroom setting. It was designed to help students develop reading techniques appropriate to specific subject areas, good study habits, perceptual and listening skills, vocabulary, spelling, and a proper balance in speed of comprehension. Short stories and essays read in this class became writing assignments in the writing course.

The three unit writing and English fundamentals course was also conducted in a classroom setting. It covered English fundamentals including grammer, spelling, punctuation, and the construction of sentences, paragraphs, and short essays.*

The basic math course was a one unit lecture/tutorial course, which was conducted both in a classroom setting and in an individualized setting. It was designed to increase comprehension of basic arithmetic skills utilizing tutorial assistance, calculators, computer-assisted instruction, programmed texts and other review material.*

The reading/writing/math lab consisted of the Basic Education System,[11] controlled readers, tapes, cassettes, tests, supplemental reading materials, etc. The instruction was self-paced with tutors and specialists available for student assistance and supervision.*

All students who were reading at the 6.9 and below grade level were counseled into the reading/writing courses. Those who scored 10 or less on the quantitative portion of the "SCAT" were counseled into the basic math class.

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[11]Basic Education System, U. S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration, Job Corps, Revised 1972.

*For more specific information about these courses and the lab, the reader may contact Mrs. Ruby Wallace.

SPECIFIC METHODOLOGIES EMPLOYED IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS DEPARTMENT

An examination of the developmental skills program revealed that it was rather traditional in nature, offering basic courses in the essential skills areas. Nevertheless, it appeared to be successful because of some of its characteristics, which were:

1) testing and placement
2) group orientation
3) close instructor contact with students
4) utilization of "skills" specialists
5) course uniformity
6) non-traditional reading assignments
7) student adherence to firm deadlines
8) pre- and post-testing, and
9) required frequent departmental meetings

Research seemed to suggest that traditional teaching methods and programs need not be scrapped when teaching minority students. A study conducted by Goodman and Buck on urban children in the Detroit area, wherein more than half of the students were Black, pointed out that the only special disadvantage which speakers of low-status dialects suffer in learning to read was one imposed by teachers and schools. They further indicated that "rejection of their dialects and educators' confusion of linguistic difference with linguistic deficiency interfered with the natural process by which reading is acquired and undermined the linguistic self-confidence of divergent readers."[12]

The basic skills program at Los Angeles Southwest College is basically traditional, relying heavily on established methods of teaching, such as lecture/discussion, individualized, self-paced, and tutorial. Of the characteristics listed above, perhaps the only one that could be classified as somewhat unique at the college level is the degree of student-instructor contact. This close contact is maintained by:

1) placing telephone calls to students
2) holding private conferences with students
3) insuring instructor availability
4) providing a sign-in and sign-out record in the reading/writing/math lab, and
5) displaying a genuine concern for students.

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[12] Kenneth S. Goodman with Catherine Buck, "Dialect Barriers to Reading Comprehension Revisited," The Reading Teacher, 27 (October, 1973), pp. 6-12.

A Rand Corporation study published in the Los Angeles Times pinpointed successful ways of teaching reading. The study stated that "reading achievement of Black pupils in Los Angeles can be raised significantly if teachers are trained well in how to use reading materials, if they believe in their ability to teach minority children and if classrooms are free of disruption . . ."[13] This was one of the reasons why a staff of reading/writing and math specialists were employed at this college.

At present there are two classifications of instructors in the Skills Department:

1) reading and writing, and
2) math.

These instructors hold advanced degrees and have special interests, techniques and self-confidence in teaching minority students in their areas of expertise. The departmental instructors are also housed in close proximity of each other in order to hold frequent meetings to facilitate exchange of information and teaching methods. Extended day, part-time instructors are required to use the same textbooks, instructional materials and teaching methods as day instructors. As many as four meetings of the entire staff are held each semester.

All instructors are apprised of the departmental goals:

1) a 70% retention rate
2) a 2-year improvement in reading scores each semester
3) a 5 point improvement in math scores, and
4) an improvement in student's writing samples that qualify him for the next "level" of instruction.

All the above goals are specific enough to be quantifiable and measurable.

By using the data, facts and the points presented so far in this paper, the "Developmental Skills Program" was created at Los Angeles Southwest College.

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[13]The Los Angeles Times, July 9, 1976.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS PROGRAM

Currently, the Developmental Skills Department of Los Angeles Southwest College offers basic courses in reading, writing, and math to meet the needs of new students entering the College. The need for such a department was recognized after an extensive 1-1/2 year pilot program in basic reading and writ[illegible]

A. HISTORY

For the first time in the history of the College, the reading test scores of students entering in the fall semester, 1974 were analyzed to determine the reading levels of new students entering the College. The data pointed out that more than 60% of these students were reading at or below the 7th grade level and that only 7% were reading well enough to enroll in college-level transferable courses.

In the spring semester, 1975, the College offered two courses in reading while investigating the feasibility of embarking upon a total reading/writing program. The first semester pilot program was very successful, posting a high retention rate and raising the average reading level of students by 1.5 grade equivalents. (This was an academic growth rate 5.2 times their previous rate.*)

During the 75-76 school year, more than 600 students were enrolled concurrently in basic reading and writing. Although this additional one year pilot program was successful, it was evident that in order to meet the needs of new students, the college administration had to:

1) Establish the teaching of basic reading, writing, and math as a top priority requirement.

2) Formulate a new Developmental Skills Department, specializing in the teaching of basic reading, writing, and math.

3) Place the new department on an equal footing with other instructional departments by assigning to it appropriate staff, facilities, and equipment.

4) Coordinate the Developmental Skills Program with the Learning Resources Center, providing individualized instruction in a laboratory setting.

5) Establish an evaluation and management team in order to provide ongoing management information necessary to the success of the program.

*Please see Table 2

A major step forward at Southwest College was the establishing of a Developmental Skills Department in the fall, 1976 semester, with a full compliment of reading, writing, and math specialists. This newly created Department was allocated its own separate budget and facilities.

B. RECENT REORGANIZATION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS DEPARTMENT

In order to more adequately meet the needs of a growing student body, the course offerings in the Developmental Skills Department were revised and expanded in the fall, 1977 semester.

A developmental communications course was designed for students reading at or below the fifth grade level (Developmental Communications 20). This course met six hours weekly plus two hours of lab. It comprised a total language approach, including such skills as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Two developmental communications courses were structured for students reading from the sixth through the eighth grade levels (Developmental Communications 21 and Developmental Communications 23). These three-unit courses were coordinated to reinforce basic reading-writing skills. Students who scored at these levels on the college placement test (Nelson-Denny Reading Test) were enrolled in these courses concurrently.

A one-unit basic math course was expanded to three units to afford additional instruction in basic math skills. Students who scored below the twentieth percentile on the placement test (SCAT) were placed in this course.

The methodology for investigating the program effectiveness, of course, followed from the basic organization of the program.

PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

All students entering the College were required to sit for the College Placement Test.[14] After the results were determined each student was required to get his program approved by a counselor before enrolling in classes. Those students scoring below the ninth grade level were recommended for basic reading and writing classes (Developmental Skills). Of these students, those scoring at the 6.9 grade and below levels, were required to enroll in two three-unit classes taken concurrently and involving a total language approach (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). These students were also required to attend the Learning Resources Center one or more hours per week (many of these students spent additional hours in the Center). The program in use in the Learning Resources Center was the Basic Education System, a reading management system.

Clearly, the organization of the program did lend itself to the pre-test/post-test evaluation design. Accordingly, during the first week of class, all students were pre-tested with the Nelson Reading Test to determine their reading levels. They were post tested during the last week of the semester with the same instrument. Based on the results of the pre- and post-test scores, the average reading improvement for all students in the program was determined. The students' records of lab attendance, classroom performance, improvement in reading scores, and a writing sample were used to determine the students' placement in higher reading and writing courses. Many students, after one semester, were recommended for placement into college-level English (Reading and Composition).

Students who completed basic courses in the Developmental Skills Department raised their reading levels as indicated below:

Spring, 1975	Fall, 1975	Spring, 1976	Fall, 1976	Spring, 1977
1.6 years	1.5 years	1.4 years	1.7 years	2.3 years

As mentioned, most of these students, after just one semester, were recommended for higher college work. In addition to the improvement of reading scores, a high level of student retention was also achieved (approximately 80% in the 76-77 academic year).

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[14] Please see footnote #7 for a description of the Placement Test.

PROGRAM EVALUATION FINDINGS

Although a basic skills program may appear to be successful, college officials should evaluate it continuously to determine its effectiveness. Therefore, a study was conducted during fall semester 1976 to determine whether those students who were enrolled in reading and visited the laboratory made gains in reading that were significantly higher than those who were also enrolled in reading but did not attend the lab. For the purpose of this study, it was decided that those students who used the lab for individualized instruction at least six times (1 hour each visit) during the semester would be considered "users" of the lab while all others would be "non users" of the lab. The reading scores depicting reading improvement in four different categories are shown in Table I.

TABLE 1

STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT IN READING SCORES, FALL 1976

Students Enrolled in Reading Only and Attending Lab Column (1) "User"	Students Enrolled in Reading Only & Not Attending Lab Column (2)	Students Enrolled in Reading and Writing and Attending Lab Column (3) "User"	Student Enrolled in Reading and Writing & Not Attending Lab Column (4)
$N = 25$	$N = 24$	$N = 37$	$N = 20$
$\bar{x} = +2.5$	$\bar{x} = +1.4$	$\bar{x} = +1.6$	$\bar{x} = +1.4$
Decision: Reject $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ at $P < .01$		Decision: Cannot reject at $\mu_3 = \mu_4$ at $P < .05$	

Those students enrolled in reading and using the lab (Column 1) had an average improvement in reading level of 2.5 years, while those students enrolled in reading and not using the lab (Column 2) had an average improvement in reading level of 1.4 years. The difference in reading improvement of the two groups was 1.1 years. A test of the equality of means at the 0.01 level of significance reveals that the two population means are significantly different. Those students who were enrolled in reading and attended lab made significantly greater improvement in reading than those who did not attend the lab sessions.

Column 3 of Table 1 contains the mean improvement in reading scores of students who were enrolled in both reading and writing courses and who also attended the lab. The mean reading improvement scores of students who were enrolled in both courses but who did not attend the lab are listed in Column 4. The means of these two columns of scores were compared to determine whether there was any significant difference between the groups. A test of the equality of means at the .05 level of significance showed that the mean scores were not significantly different.

Although the scores in Columns 3 and 4 were not significantly different as had been hypothesized, two observations can be made. First, the average improvement in reading scores as shown in Column 3(1.6) is numerically greater than the average improvement in Column 4 (1.4). Second, the average improvement in Columns 1 and 3 (students attending lab and classes) are numerically greater than those in Columns 2 and 4 (1.4 each), students not attending the lab.

Although the average improvement in reading scores in Column 3 (1.6) is numerically greater than the improvement in the scores in Column 4 (1.4), it was expected that those students who were enrolled in both courses and attending the lab (Column 3) would make the greatest improvement in reading. As have been observed, students who were enrolled in reading only and attended the lab made the greatest average gain (2.5). There are at least two good reasons why this occurred:

1) students who enrolled in reading only and attended the lab were more motivated than others, and

2) these students may have been initially better prepared academically because they were not required to enroll in both courses concurrently.

The major finding of the study is that there is an association between enrollment in reading classes and attendance at the lab and greater average improvement in reading; i.e., greater improvement than for those who did not attend lab.

There appears to be evidence that a program which requires concurrent enrollment in reading and writing classes and the attendance of lab sessions serves to successfully teach and reinforce basic reading, writing and study skills.

In addition, the discerning reader will note that even the grade equivalent gains of: (a) 1.6 years in spring, 1975, (b) 1.5 years in fall, 1975, (c) 1.4 years in spring, 1976, (d) 1.7 years in fall, 1976, and (3) 2.3 years in spring, 1977, are themselves, grade-equivalent gains that are very much higher than the average grade-equivalent gains made in the past by these inner-city students. For example, it has been mentioned repeatedly that 70%

of these inner-city students scored below the 7.0 grade level after attending school for 12 years. The average grade equivalent gain in the preceding years was thus about 7/12 of one year or .58 grade equivalents per academic year or approximately .29 grade equivalents per semester. A comparison can, therefore, be made between the approximate previous grade-equivalent gain (.29 per semester), and the known grade equivalent gain made during each of the five semesters of the Developmental Skills Program. This comparison is shown below in Table 2. The term "multiple" is used to refer to the multiplier needed to multiply the approximate previous grade-equivalent gain (.29) per semester in order to achieve the grade-equivalent gain made by these same students who attended the Developmental Skills Program. For example, the grade-equivalent gain made by Developmental Skills students by the end of the spring, 1975, semester was 1.6 years. This gain is 5.5 times as great as the average gain made previously (.29). Similarly, the gain made by Developmental Skills students by the end of the spring, 1977, semester (when the Developmental Skills Program had gained control of its own faculty, facilities, and budget and had expanded and revised certain course offerings) was 2.3 years. This gain is 7.9 times as great as the average gain made previously (.29) in the same length of time. All this is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of previous inner-city students' grade-equivalent gain made after attending the Developmental Skills Program at Los Angeles Southwest College.

Approximate previous grade-equivalent gain in one academic semester	Spring 1975 grade-equivalent gain in one academic semester		Fall, 1975		Spring, 1976		Fall, 1976		Spring, 1977*	
	G.E.	Multiple	G.E.	Multiple	G.E.	Multiple	G.E.	Multiple	G.E.	Multiple
.29	1.6	5.5	1.5	5.2	1.4	4.8	1.7	5.9	2.3	7.9

By taking all the "multipliers" from each of the 5 years of the Developmental Skills Program and dividing the sum by 5, one gets the average "multiplier" for the five years. When this is done the average "multiplier" is 5.86 or 5.9. Thus inner-city students accelerated their academic gain by a factor of 5.9; i.e., they gained an average of 5.9 times what they had academically gained previously (K-12).

*The enormous multiplier of 7.9 took place in the spring semester, 1977. By that time, the Developmental Skills Program had its own budget and facilities and had expanded and revised certain of its course offerings. Judging by this remarkable result, the Department had reached its "critical mass" level and had instituted effective instructional improvements based on previous experience.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The steady decline in reading scores of entering college students is a signal for community colleges, especially those inner-city community colleges that have a preponderance of "Black" students, to develop and implement college instructional programs that are designed to teach basic skills to these students. Research data cited in this paper seem to suggest that colleges that are located in predominately Black areas have a great need for these basic skills programs.

As mentioned earlier, community college administrators are faced with a menu of educational choices that includes the maintenance of academic excellence without regard to students' needs, the "watering down" of present instructional offerings, or the restructuring of the instructional program to include a layer of developmental courses designed to reinforce and strengthen the total educational program.

There appears to be no magic formula for formulating a basic skills program in reading, writing, and math. A successful program may embody a combination of teaching methods and approaches as well as the utilization of teaching machines and supplemental reading materials. The conventional method of teaching reading, writing, and math coupled with the use of a well equipped lab may well be one of the best known approaches to the problem. One significant fact may be the Rand Corporation finding that a successful way of teaching reading is the employment of teachers who are trained well and who believe in their ability to teach minority children. Observation of the developmental skills staff at Los Angeles Southwest College confirms the fact that these teachers have this crucial conviction.

The effectiveness of an adequate basic skills program can be measured by the students' retention rate and their improvement in reading, writing, and math. A retention rate of 80%, improvement in average reading levels of 1.4 to 2.3 grade equivalents during a semester, and "promotion" of 70% or more of the students to the next higher level of instruction after one semester are seen as by the authors of this paper as being good measures of a successful program in basic skills. This program is also associated with a very high "multiplier" effect in terms of the fact that inner-city students who attended the Developmental Skills Program made academic gains 5-6 times as high as they made previously. Thus the Developmental Skills Program at Southwest College is "successful."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students' deficiencies in basic skills are becoming so severe that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare at the federal level should take action to meet this worsening national problem. A comparatively high rate of literacy of its people has been one of the principal assets of our country. In order to maintain an educated public, the federal government should make available larger appropriations of money to community college districts for basic skills programs in reading, writing and math. The "Reading Academy" of the "Right to Read" program is a step in this direction, but may be less than adequate to meet the need.

Administrators of community college districts need to recognize that students who are deficient in basic skills cannot function effectively in college-level work. In order to continue to meet the objective of the community or junior college in providing the freshman and sophomore years of college to all who so aspire, a high priority needs to be placed on the formulation of basic skills programs. Ideally, the programs should be designed so as to provide very high quality instruction in small classes (10-15 students)* and well equipped reading/writing/math laboratories for individualized and self-paced instruction in the basic skills. Otherwise, without an effective, successful Developmental Skills Program those students who are initially deficient when they first enroll, may very likely be lost from the college environment. That is to say, that if these students do not receive basic skills instruction, they may very well drop-out, and be forever lost to higher education. This would be both an individual loss and society's loss.

To all administrators of all inner-city community colleges in America the lessons learned at Los Angeles Southwest College is "Don't give up on these inner-city students! Take a look at the Developmental Skills Program at Los Angeles Southwest College because this program or elements of it may very well be successfully utilized elsewhere in America -- especially in the many inner-city community colleges."

*The success of the Developmental Skills Program at Los Angeles Southwest College was achieved with a much higher average class size than this ideal.

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF EVALUATION SERVICES NOW OFFERED BY THE DIVISION OF PROGRAM EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND PUPIL SERVICES

THE THREE INITIAL PROGRAM EVALUATION SERVICES

In the acknowledgement section of this paper it was mentioned that the following three initial evaluation services envolved in the Los Angeles County Office. These initial services, offered through the Division of Program Evaluation, Research, and Pupil Services are: (1) Educational Program Evaluation Planning Assistance, (2) Educational Program Audit Assistance, and (3) Research and Evaluation Support.*

I. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EVALUATION PLANNING ASSISTANCE

Local educational agencies may elect to receive Educational Program Evaluation Planning Assistance prior to having an audit of a program, or they may elect to have this service without later having an audit. Educational Program Evaluation Assistance is a service which is intended to strengthen the internal process of evaluation in a local educational agency. In collaboration with a County consultant, the local evaluator, and/or his or her team, designs an effective evaluation system that includes statistical procedures and the development of performance objectives, process objectives, evaluation specifications, the evaluation design, and related documents.

II. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AUDIT ASSISTANCE

Local educational agencies may elect to have an Educational Program Audit. The Educational Program Audit is a performance control process based upon external reviews conducted by qualified outside consultants. It is designed to verify the results of the evaluation of an educational program and to assess the appropriateness of evaluation procedures used for determining the effectiveness of the operation and management of the program.

III. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SUPPORT

An evaluator at a local educational agency may elect to receive assistance in this area. This would include statistical data analysis, data synthesis, and evaluation report writing and interpretation.

for further information on these and other evaluation services (such as Evaluation Implementation Assistance) offered, or in order to arrange for assistance in these areas, please contact:

Dr. Gordon E. Footman, Director
Division of Program Evaluation, Research, and Pupil Services
Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools
9300 East Imperial Highway
Downey, California 90242

*Two additional services have recently evolved. These are (a) Formal or Informal Program Evaluation Implementation, and (b) Informal and/or Abbreviated Educational Program Audits.

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